

House Resolution 494

By: Representatives Smith of the 70th, McCall of the 30th, Reese of the 98th, Smith of the 131st, Manning of the 32nd, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the House Coastal Georgia Sound Science Initiative Study Committee; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, rapid population growth in coastal Georgia, increased tourism, and sustained
4 industrial activity have adversely affected coastal Georgia's water resources and limited the
5 available water supply; and

6 WHEREAS, the main source of water supply in the coastal area is the Upper Floridan
7 aquifer, an extremely productive water source which was first developed in the late 1800's
8 and has been used extensively in the area ever since; and

9 WHEREAS, water withdrawals from the aquifer have resulted in several problems,
10 including: substantial water-level declines; migration of seawater into the aquifer at the
11 northern end of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina; contamination of the aquifer from
12 underlying brine-filled strata at Brunswick, Georgia; and decreased ground-water inflow to
13 springs, freshwater ponds, marshes, and wetlands, which could affect the balance of
14 freshwater and saltwater in tidal rivers and estuaries; and

15 WHEREAS, saltwater contamination has constrained further development of the Upper
16 Floridan aquifer in coastal Georgia and created fierce competing demands for the limited
17 fresh water supply; and

18 WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources
19 (EPD) released an interim strategy in April, 1997, to manage saltwater intrusion in the Upper
20 Floridan aquifer; and, as part of this interim plan, EPD capped permitted withdrawal from
21 the Upper Floridan aquifer at 1997 rates in the Savannah and Brunswick areas; and

1 WHEREAS, the EPD has funded a program of scientific and feasibility studies, known as
2 the Georgia Coastal Sound Science Initiative, to support development of a related final
3 water-management strategy;

4 WHEREAS, the current status of the initiative is as follows: all field studies of the initiative
5 have been completed; approximately 41 peer-reviewed scientific reports have been published
6 to date; a comprehensive ground-water and surface-water monitoring network has been
7 established in Georgia; ground-water modeling capable of indicating where and when
8 saltwater intrusion will occur is in development and initial results will be available in the
9 spring of 2005; the cost-effectiveness of various methods of stopping saltwater intrusion
10 needs further study; a first draft of a final strategy and public hearings are scheduled for the
11 summer of 2005; and a revised draft of a final strategy is due in December, 2005; and

12 WHEREAS, it is imperative to review the results of the initiative, especially with regard to
13 what, if any, legislation may be warranted thereby.

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
15 there is created the House Coastal Georgia Sound Science Initiative Study Committee to be
16 composed of five members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker
17 of the House of Representatives. The Speaker shall designate a member of the committee
18 as chairperson of the committee. The chairperson shall call all meetings of the committee.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the conditions,
20 needs, issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action
21 or legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee may
22 conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or
23 convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and
24 accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution. The members of the committee
25 shall receive the allowances provided for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of
26 Georgia Annotated. The allowances authorized by this resolution shall not be received by
27 any member of the committee for more than five days unless additional days are authorized.
28 The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from the funds
29 appropriated to the House of Representatives. In the event the committee makes a report of
30 its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, such
31 report shall be made on or before December 1, 2005. The committee shall stand abolished
32 on December 1, 2005.